



Big Sky School District #72

TOGETHER SAFELY

A COVID-19 Guide for Parents & Students

August 18, 2020

Dear Big Sky School District Parents and Students:

The 2020-2021 school year is about to begin, and the one factor we can be certain of is that it will look and sometimes *feel* different from other school years. With this mind, our guiding principles for the school year remain unchanged in many ways. At Big Sky School District, we aim to: **cultivate** each student's potential, **engage** in globally minded education and experiential learning in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and **empower** students to lead inspired lives of impact, resilience, and authenticity.

To fulfill our aim and mission, we need to keep our students, teachers, and larger community *healthy*. To this end, as we prepare for the school year at the district level, we are asking that parents and students also begin preparing for the start of the school. Below you will find the important steps to opening the school year safely so that we can be "together safely."

1. Read through the BSSD COVID Guide.
2. Review the CDC back to school checklist.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Back-to-School-Planning-for-In-Person-Classes.pdf>
3. Purchase and practice wearing face masks with your son/daughter/s.
4. Watch for COVID-19 symptoms in your family and seek medical attention or a COVID-19 test if symptoms arise.
5. Follow social distancing protocols.

We know that this school year, in particular, will require flexibility, openness, and empathy. We are committed to providing our students with an outstanding educational experience, and we deeply appreciate your support as we "together safely" navigate these uncharted waters.

Thanks for letting us work with your children.

-BSSD Administration

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Re-opening of School for Students with the 50-50 Hybrid Model

Slow Opening

We are beginning the school year with the 50-50 Hybrid Learning Model 2 to ensure the health and safety of our community while engaging our students with direct instruction. To maintain social distancing and proper hygiene procedures, we will have a “slow” roll out for the first week of school for students. This will allow our staff to work with and train students on our new school protocols. Starting with smaller groups will give everyone time to adapt to the new environment. See the schedule below. 100% online students who need a computer, can pick up a device on their assigned cohort day at 9 AM in the front office.

	Monday 8/31/20	Tuesday 9/1/20	Wednesday 9/2/20	Thursday 9/3/20	Friday 9/4/20
OES	Grades 1,3,5 Cohort 1	Grades 1, 3, 5 Cohort 2	Grades Kinder, 2, 4 Cohort 1	Grades Kinder, 2, 4 Cohort 2	No Students Staff on Campus
OMS	Grades 6 Cohort 1	Grades 6 Cohort 2	Grades 7, 8 Cohort 1	Grades 7, 8 Cohort 2	
LPHS	Grades 11,12 Cohort 1	Grades 11,12 Cohort 2	Grades 9,10 Cohort 1	Grades 9,10 Cohort 2	

COVID-19 Symptoms - from the Gallatin County Health Department

The following checklist includes symptoms to watch for and consult your healthcare provider about:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell
- New runny nose or congestion
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

Daily Screening at Home

We ask that parents screen their children before the start of the school day. If your son/daughter displays **any COVID-19 related symptoms** from the list above, please keep them home and reach out to your healthcare provider.

Social Distancing Guidelines at School

Students and faculty will be asked to maintain social distancing throughout the school day. **Social distancing** is a term used to broadly describe steps we can take to reduce the opportunity to transfer illness from person-to-person. To protect our school community, we will follow these guidelines.

- **Students and BSSD staff will maintain a distance of 6 feet from each other whenever possible.**
- There should be no hand-shaking or other non-essential physical contact among staff or students.
- Eliminate unnecessary sharing of personal items or school equipment among staff and students.
- Desks will be separated with 6 feet of space between them.
- Hallways will be taped off to create divided lanes for foot traffic.
- Plexiglass partitions in certain areas will be in place to prevent the spread of germs.
- Maximum capacities numbers for restrooms and other small spaces will be posted and monitored.
- Lunch will be in the classroom or outside, depending on the weather.
- Students and staff will have designated entry and exit points.

Face Masks

Per the Governor's Mask Mandate, all students and faculty will be required to wear a mask at school. Students may wear their own mask provided they meet the standards listed below. If a student does not have an appropriate mask, we will provide him/her with one. Our aim is to make sure all students have a quality mask for the day.

Masks Requirements

- No buffs
- No bandanas
- No neck gaiters
- No vents

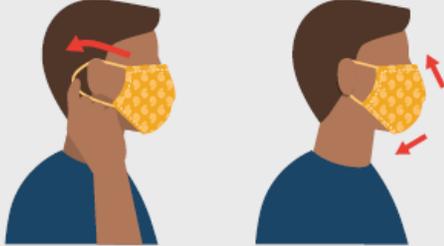
Mask Rules at BSSD

- Students must have a mask on before entering the school. If a student does not have a mask, one will be provided to the student before entering the school at the **sanitation station** (a point where students will sanitize their hands and receive a mask, if necessary).
- Students will be expected to wear their masks at all times when in the school. Students who refuse will be sent home.
- When social distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained outside, a mask must be worn.
- Exceptions to the mask policy would require a doctor's note and notification to the building principal.

How to Wear a Mask from the CDC

WEAR YOUR FACE COVERING CORRECTLY

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily




WEAR A FACE COVERING TO PROTECT OTHERS

- Wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth to help protect others in case you're infected with COVID-19 but don't have symptoms
- Wear a face covering in public settings when around people who don't live in your household, especially when it may be difficult for you to stay six feet apart
- Wear a face covering correctly for maximum protection
- Don't put the face covering around your neck or up on your forehead
- Don't touch the face covering, and, if you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect

Hygiene Practices

We always practice good hygiene in the school, but this year it is more important than ever. Students and faculty will follow these guidelines.

- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible
- Use hand sanitizer before entering the school, during school, and upon leaving school
- Be encouraged to not touch their faces
- Cover their mouths with their elbows (vampire cover) whenever sneezing or coughing

Additionally, we will have CDC Hygiene Posters throughout the school buildings to remind everyone of these simple steps to stop the spread of germs.

Facilities

Maintaining a clean and healthy facility is of the utmost importance this year. To this end, the following tactics have or will be implemented.

- New air filters will be installed before students arrive on campus for classes.
- Windows and doors will be open to facilitate airflow. As the weather changes, windows will be open for the first 10 minutes of class (at the minimum).
- We have hired an additional custodian to join our team.
- Classrooms and common areas will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.
- As long as we are in Learning Model 2, playground equipment is off-limits to all students.
- The facilities are closed to the public while in Learning Model 2.

Temperature Scanning

Infrared cameras will be set up at the school entrances. All students and staff will be temperature checked as they enter the building. All hats and beanies must be off for the temperature scan to work.

Testing

Through the generosity of community organizations, we will be doing two rounds of testing for our staff at the start of the year. We will continue to work closely with the Big Sky Medical Center and the Gallatin County Health Department. Additionally, work is underway to finalize an arrangement of 1,000 COVID-19 tests to be available to the school. Tests will be voluntary.

Student Expectations

We recognize that students will have many procedures and expectations to adjust to as we start the school year. We know that it will be challenging at times; however, we are committed to providing a safe environment for all students and staff. To this end, we expect students to follow all safety, mask, hygiene, and social distancing protocols. We want our students to live into the IB Learner Profile by being **knowledgeable** about the expectations and **caring** to their peers, teachers, and families.

Governor's Mask Directive Amended to Apply to Schools

Therefore, in accordance with the authority vested in me under the Constitution, Article VI, Sections 4 and 13, and the laws of the State of Montana, Title 10, Chapter 3 and Title 50, Chapter 1, MCA, and other applicable provisions of the Constitution and Montana law, I hereby direct the following measures be in place in the State of Montana, effective immediately:

1. The July 15 Directive providing for the mandatory use of face coverings in certain settings is hereby amended to require the use of face coverings, as detailed in that directive, in all public and private K-12 schools in counties with four or more active cases.
2. All provisions set forth in the July 15 Directive apply to public and private K-12 schools.
3. Indoor school spaces are considered indoor spaces open to the public.
4. School-related outdoor activities are considered organized outdoor activities.
5. All provisions of the July 15 Directive remain in effect except as expressly amended by this Directive.

FAQ from the Gallatin County Health Department

What can families and staff do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school setting?

There are a number of actions we can all take every day to reduce the risk of catching the disease or spreading it to others. First, we need all families to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms every day and keep students home if they are sick. As part of your morning routine, ask your child about whether they are experiencing any of the [common symptoms listed by the CDC listed below](#). Conduct a temperature check prior to leaving for school. Students and staff should not come to school if they are feeling ill.

The following checklist includes symptoms to watch for and consult your healthcare provider about:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell
- New runny nose or congestion
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

This list is subject to change as new symptoms of COVID-19 are identified. Students with symptoms should not attend school and parents should consult their healthcare provider regarding their return to school.

It is important to note that not all students with COVID-19 will show clear symptoms, and not all students with symptoms have COVID-19. This is one of the reasons the disease is so difficult to contain, and also why it is important that we all continue to take other precautions.

Those additional precautions that we need all staff and students to practice includes washing their hands frequently and thoroughly and to avoid touching their face. Simple hand soap can render the virus harmless if a person washes thoroughly.

We also need students and staff to comply with social distancing procedures and local public health rules requiring use of face covering inside schools.

While social distancing inside a school will be challenging and imperfect, efforts to do so are designed to limit the number of students or staff exposed if someone inside the school becomes ill with COVID-19. Our shared willingness to make these social distancing

measures effective will have a direct impact on the need to isolate or quarantine students or staff if the disease is detected inside the school.

What happens if someone gets sick in school?

Staff and kids with symptoms will be separated from well students using a designated isolation area. Parent/guardian emergency contact will be contacted and are expected to pick up their child promptly. It will be important to have updated local contacts listed with the school so that your child can be picked up if necessary.

Individuals with COVID-19 signs or symptoms will be referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation on whether testing is needed.

What symptoms should require a student or staff to be sent home?

If someone has a fever of 100.4 or higher, a dry and persistent cough, shortness of breath or other symptoms identified by the CDC, schools staff should call parents to take the child home.

Many children who test positive for COVID-19 have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. It is also important to remember that some children will become ill from influenza, strep, the common cold, or a host of other causes. This will make the coming school year difficult and stressful for some families.

It is crucial to remember: Not everyone with symptoms has COVID and not everyone with COVID has obvious symptoms. This is another reason that diligent social distancing, hand washing, and surface disinfection are important.

What happens when someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 is inside a school building?

In most instances, a single case of COVID-19 in a school would not warrant closing the entire school. Community spread and how much contact the person with COVID-19 had with others, as well as when such contact took place, will be considered.

These variables will also be considered when determining how long a school, or part of the school, stays closed if closure is necessary. If the spread of COVID-19 within a school is higher than in the community, or if the school is the source of an outbreak, administrators will work with local health officials to determine if temporarily closing the school building is necessary.

When a case is identified, Gallatin City-County Health Department (GCCHD) will work with school staff to assess exposure (who the person had contact with, for how long, and in what context). The health department and school staff will communicate to parents when a case is detected in a school, and will work to identify other students or staff who may be close contacts with the known case. (The current definition of a close contact is a person who has been within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more.)

In assessing exposure and identifying close contacts, public health nurses will take into account with whom the case patient had close contact. If available they will assess seating charts and take into consideration the ages of students involved and the systems set up in the school to minimize disease transmission.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact with someone who has COVID-19, health department nurses or staff will contact those staff members or the parents/guardians of children involved. Health department nurses will work with families to help them understand their exposure, possible symptoms to monitor, and possible referrals to health care providers to assess symptoms and determine if testing is necessary. In some cases, public health nurses may refer a student or staff directly to a testing center for testing.

Gallatin City-County Health Department will follow guidance from the CDC in determining who needs to be placed in isolation or quarantine. Isolation is the term that refers to separating someone who is sick with COVID-19. Quarantine is the term for someone who was exposed to someone who has the disease, and is at higher risk to develop and spread the disease themselves. Anyone with a laboratory confirmed case of the disease will be required to isolate until they are no longer contagious, typically 10 days from the onset of symptoms.

What is contact tracing and what will that look like in a school/district?

Contact tracing is the means by which COVID-19 infections and exposures are identified, subsequently notified, and ultimately isolated or quarantined to reduce spread of the virus. Contact tracing is a fundamental public health practice that is used to stop the spread of many infectious diseases, including COVID-19. Contact tracing consists of a series of interviews, performed by public health nurses and workers, which are designed to identify close contacts of a student or staff member that tested positive for COVID-19. Close contacts are defined as having been within six feet of an infected individual for more than 15 minutes.

What will happen if my child is in contact with someone who has COVID-19?

The CDC currently recommends that close contacts of known cases (those who have been within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) be quarantined at home to ensure they do not develop and spread the disease. This quarantine period lasts for 14 days from the person's last known exposure to the person who has the disease.

Identifying close contacts will also take into account the ages of students because different ages interact in different ways. In some cases, it may be necessary to quarantine entire classrooms in order to contain spread of the disease.

In some cases, students identified as close contacts may be asked to have a COVID-19 test, especially if they have symptoms. If the test comes back positive for COVID-19, the Health Department will contact the parent/guardian and work with them to help connect to health care services or social supports.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, when can they return to school?

That will depend on a number of factors, including how they are doing recuperating from the disease. In general, and with some exceptions, students and staff who are diagnosed with COVID-19 through a lab test and who do not have a fever or worsening symptoms should be able to go back to school 10 days after the onset of symptoms. Ten days from the onset of symptoms is the period of time when someone who has the disease is most likely to spread it to others.

A public health nurse from Gallatin City-County Health Department will work with parents directly and will determine when a child is no longer contagious and can go back to school.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact and placed in quarantine, when can they go back to school?

Children with a known close contact with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days from their last contact with that case and until return to school is approved by the local health department in accordance with the CDC guidance. This period of time is recommended by the CDC because it is the period during which someone who has been exposed may develop the disease and pass it on to others.

A public health nurse from Gallatin City-County Health Department will work with families directly and will determine when a child can go back to school.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact and then have a negative COVID-19 test, can they go back to school immediately?

No. In order to protect others in the school, CDC recommends that all students or staff who have been identified as close contacts stay at home for 14 days from their last exposure. That's because even if someone tests negative immediately after an exposure, the virus typically take varying lengths of time to make someone sick. It is possible that someone who tests negative for active disease is still carrying the virus and could develop the disease at a later date. The test cannot predict if you will develop the disease at a later date.

If a student in quarantine feels fine, why can't they go back to school?

One of the hardest things about COVID-19 is that people who are exposed to the disease may not develop the disease for up to 14 days. During that time, called an "incubation period", they may be carrying the virus and could develop the disease at any time and pass it on to others.

It is also possible that people, especially children, may develop the disease and pass it on to others before they develop symptoms. This is what makes the virus hard to control and why we ask people who have been exposed and are most likely to develop the disease to stay at home until they are no longer at risk to spread the disease.

Will I be notified if my child is not a close contact?

A health department public health nurse or other staff will be in contact with parents of all students identified as a close contact and work with those families to answer questions and provide resources. In addition, the schools and the health department will communicate to parents and staff when cases inside a school are identified and keep the updated on efforts to limit disease spread.

However, it will not be possible for schools or public health staff to contact parents of every student who is not a close contact. Parents who are concerned their child may have been exposed can call the school or the health department.

If a student or staff is wearing a face covering do they still need to stay in quarantine?

Yes. While the CDC recommends face coverings as an important way to reduce disease transmission, current guidance advises infection control measures (including isolation and quarantine) for anyone who is a close contact with a known case, whether they are wearing a face covering or not.

Face coverings are a tool to help reduce spread of the disease through droplets exhaled by people when they talk, sneeze, or cough. But face coverings do not offer 100% protection and do not remove all risk. That's why it is so important for all students and staff to stay home if they are sick, keep six feet from others when feasible, and wash their hands frequently and thoroughly.

What is the value of face coverings?

Face coverings are an important strategy to reduce transmission of the COVID-19, primarily by reducing the spread of infection from the wearer to those around. The Gallatin City-County Board of Health has approved an emergency health rule applicable to all schools in Gallatin County requiring the use of face coverings for all adults and children in grades 6-12 whenever social distancing cannot be achieved. Older children, such as those in middle and high school, are likely to be able to follow guidance regarding proper mask usage. Thus, the use of face coverings can provide an additional layer of protection against the spread of infection. It is also recommended that children wear face coverings while riding a bus or shared transportation.

I have heard that most children get mild symptoms and recover well if they contract COVID-19? Is this true, and if so why are we making such a big deal about this?

Thankfully, it is true that many children who contract the disease have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. It is also true that it is exceedingly rare for a child to become hospitalized or die from COVID-19. However, there have been rare serious cases in children and some children do seem to develop long-term health effects from the virus.

But the main reason we are taking such careful precautions about this disease is to limit spread within our community to protect those who are more likely to get seriously ill. We know that the disease is more dangerous for people over the age of 60 and people with underlying health conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, obesity, heart and lung conditions, or compromised immune systems). And because the virus that causes

COVID-19 is new to human beings, we know that few people have built up immunity to the disease. These factors make it especially important to do all we can to contain spread of the disease through measures such as those summarized in this document.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act¹

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The Department of Labor's (Department) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) administers and enforces the new law's paid leave requirements. These provisions will apply from the effective date through December 31, 2020.

Generally, the Act provides that employees of covered employers are eligible for:

- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay* where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor; and
- *Up to an additional 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Covered Employers: The paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA apply to certain public employers, and private employers with fewer than 500 employees.^[1] Most employees of the federal government are covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was not amended by this Act, and are therefore not covered by the expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA. However, federal employees covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act are covered by the paid sick leave provision.

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees may qualify for exemption from the requirement to provide leave due to school closings or child care unavailability if the leave requirements would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern.

¹ Source: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave>

Eligible Employees: *All employees* of covered employers are eligible for two weeks of paid sick time for specified reasons related to COVID-19. *Employees employed for at least 30 days* are eligible for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid family leave to care for a child under certain circumstances related to COVID-19.[2]

Notice: Where leave is foreseeable, an employee should provide notice of leave to the employer as is practicable. After the first workday of paid sick time, an employer may require employees to follow reasonable notice procedures in order to continue receiving paid sick time.

Qualifying Reasons for Leave:

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for paid sick time if the employee is unable to work (or unable to telework) due to a need for leave because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for expanded family leave if the employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19.

Duration of Leave:

For reasons (1)-(4) and (6): A full-time employee is eligible for 80 hours of leave, and a part-time employee is eligible for the number of hours of leave that the employee works on average over a two-week period.

For reason (5): A full-time employee is eligible for up to 12 weeks of leave (two weeks of paid sick leave followed by up to 10 weeks of paid expanded family & medical leave) at 40 hours a week, and a part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

Calculation of Pay:[3]

For leave reasons (1), (2), or (3): employees taking leave are entitled to pay at either their regular rate or the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

For leave reasons (4) or (6): employees taking leave are entitled to pay at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$2,000 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

For leave reason (5): employees taking leave are entitled to pay at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$12,000 in the aggregate (over a 12-week period). [4]

[1] Certain provisions may not apply to certain employers with fewer than 50 employees. *See* Department FFCRA regulations (expected April 2020).

[2] Under the Act, special rules apply for Health Care Providers and Emergency Responders.

[3] Paid sick time provided under this Act does not carryover from one year to the next. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement for unused leave upon termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

[4] An employee may elect to substitute any accrued vacation leave, personal leave, or medical or sick leave for the first two weeks of partial paid leave under this section.